

## ***FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET***

**Meeting Date:** April 12, 2012

**Agenda Item:** Bighorn Sheep Transplant Endorsement

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Endorse Course of Action

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 20 minutes

---

### **Background**

Trap and transplant of bighorn sheep is an effective management tool. The removal of sheep assists population control. Transplanted animals can ultimately represent new populations or augment existing ones. Funds from auction licenses are available for transplants with all animals receiving a health assessment at capture. The potential new release and augmentations below are presented for endorsement by the FWP Commission. Any final commission endorsement for the new transplant would come after additional formal public review to include an Environmental Assessment. Augmentations of existing populations may take place without further public review or process beyond this FWP Commission endorsement. These types of management actions and associated process are consistent with the Montana Bighorn Sheep Conservation Strategy.

### **Bighorn Sheep**

- Bighorn sheep on Wild Horse Island in FWP Region 1 represent a source population for potential transplants during the 2013 winter (January 2013). Bighorn sheep in the upper Madison (HD 302) also represent a source population.
- A potential new release site in the Bridger Mountains on public and private lands is proposed for endorsement to pursue additional formal analysis.
- Proposed augmentation for existing bighorn sheep populations in the [Cabinets \(HD 123\)](#) and [Kootenai Falls WMA \(HD 100\)](#).

### **Public Involvement Process & Results**

Continued formal public review process is required for the new release in the Bridger Mountains. This effort will include additional steps of public notification and will also look to collaborate with agricultural and sporting groups in response to their offers of assistance. Any final commission endorsement would come in late summer or early fall after this formal public review process. Augmentations of existing populations may take place without further public review or process.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

At this time, FWP recommends endorsement of the winter 2013 potential new release in the Bridger Mountains and augmentations in portions of Region 1. The new release in the Bridger Mountains must complete additional public process and additional Commission review before the transplant may proceed. These efforts represent reasonable management tools in combination with hunter harvest and are consistent with the Montana Bighorn Sheep Conservation Strategy.

### **Proposed Motion**

I move the FWP Commission endorse the new augmentation proposals in Region 1 and continued public process for the potential new release in the Bridger Mountains as presented by FWP.